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CONTACT

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Contact: WDC Communications
wdc.communications@gmail.com
www.worlddiamondcouncil.org

Participants at public WDC meeting in Las Vegas express support for robust Kimberley Process

LAS VEGAS, USA: JUNE 6, 2011 – Speaking at a public meeting organised in Las Vegas by the World Diamond Council, leaders of the diamond and jewellery industries and representatives of civil society and government have underscored the importance of maintaining a sturdy Kimberley Process, and stressed that the system remains relevant to the diamond industry despite the challenges that it faces.

The panel presentation, called "Diamond Dialogue: The Challenges of a Robust Kimberly Process," took place at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas the day before the start of the JCK Show. Discussion covered a wide range of issues, including the current state of the Kimberley Process ongoing negotiations to resolving the issue of exports from Zimbabwe's Marange region.

Appearing at such an industry forum for the first time was Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Co-President of the Governing Board of the Diamond Empowerment Fund and President of the Hip-Hop Summit Action. One should not lose sight of the fact that the Kimberley Process represents more than just preventing the infiltration of conflict diamonds into the distribution chain, he said, for it created conditions that promote the economic and social development of countries in which diamonds are mined. Dr. Chavis recalled a conversation he had with former South African Nelson Mandela, in which Mandela emphasised the diamond industry's "proclivity to do the right thing, especially when pushed."

Representing the retail jewellery trade on the panel was Susan Jacques, President and CEO of Borsheim's Fine Jewelry, a Berkshire Hathaway company. Zimbabwe-born, she expressed her passionate commitment to arriving at a proper solution to the Marange issue, and underscored the importance of maintaining consumer confidence during most critical 18 inches of the distribution pipeline, which she said is the path traveled across the counter in the jewellery store. "When our distributors told us that their system of operation made providing the chain of warranties difficult, my response was 'then change the system,' " she said.

Matt Runci, President and CEO of Jewelers of America, stressed the importance of depoliticising the Kimberley Process, and instead concentrating on defending its integrity, as a key element in protecting the entire chain of diamond jewelry distribution. This was seconded by Cecilia Gardner, the meeting's moderator and the President and CEO of the Jewelers Vigilance Committee. "The system is not perfect and the challenges we face are considerable," she said. "But the necessity of a robust Kimberley Process is undeniable, and we have to continue to work together to ensure that it remains relevant."



Both Nadim Kara, Campaign Director, Natural Resources of Partnership Africa Canada; and Brad Brooks-Rubin, Conflict Diamond Negotiator at the U.S. State Department, underlined the importance of establishing a professional administrative staff for the Kimberley Process. "We have created a regulatory system without regulators," said Brooks-Rubin, "and this needs to be addressed."

Addressing the ongoing standoff in the Marange region, World Diamond Council President Eli Izhakoff expressed his optimism that a resolution to the problem was in the offing. "It is in everybody's interest that a proper and equitable solution be found, and I am confident that this is both possible and imminent. Most important is that we establish a satisfactory level of trust among all the interested parties. If we can do that, then everything is possible."

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